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LONDON, PARIS FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/25/2017

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ASEC](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: DEADLY FORCE POLICY FOR ERITREANS ATTEMPTING TO  
FLEE ERITREA

Classified By: RSO Sean McClanahan for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: Embassy Source reported to RSO that a local party representative for the People's Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), in a monthly meeting with PFDJ party members, stated that the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE), had instituted a shoot-to-kill policy for any Eritreans attempting to flee the country into Sudan or Ethiopia. While post has been hearing stories over recent months collaborating rumors that the GSE has sanctioned such actions, this is the first report of an Eritrean official publicly acknowledging that a policy is in place. Post believes the PFDJ is openly communicating this information in an effort to deter Eritreans from even contemplating fleeing the country illegally. Source has proven a reliable reporter in the past. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

12. (C) Embassy Source reported to RSO that a PFDJ party representative, (name unknown), who covers Zoba 4 in Asmara held a monthly public meeting on July 20 for party members of this district. Source stated that a friend who had attended the meeting told him that the PFDJ representative warned the audience that the GSE had instituted a deadly force policy and would shoot and kill any Eritreans attempting to flee to Sudan or Ethiopia. Source's friend noted that the audience was comprised mostly of fathers and mothers and believed the statement was meant as a warning particularly directed at parents of children who have reached the national service draft age. The PFDJ representative stated the Eritrean Defense Forces had increased its military presence and patrols along the border and had already killed five Eritreans attempting to flee to Sudan.

13. (C) Source stated it is common knowledge in Eritrea that many people are fleeing Eritrea to avoid being forcibly drafted into the national service, which can last for an indefinite amount of time. He commented that the military roundups that occur on a regular basis in Asmara are a result of the high number of Eritreans who are deserting from national service and attempting to flee the country.

14. (C) Background Note: The PFDJ has broken Asmara into 4 districts called zobas, which cover the SE, SW, NE and NW portions of the city. The PFDJ has representatives in each district in Asmara and reportedly holds monthly meetings to distribute government information, propaganda and updates on the situation in Eritrea to PFDJ party members. Zoba 4 is the SE portion of Asmara near the Kahawta neighborhood.

Although there is a city government in Asmara that is organized like a city council in the U.S., it is the PFDJ that holds power. Source equated membership in the PFDJ to being a member of the Communist Party in the former Soviet Union. Party members receive social benefits such as ration coupons, whereas non-members are denied access to these items. Many Eritreans therefore become members, although they are not true supporters of the PFDJ. Source said that attendance at these monthly meetings is mandatory and if a family representative does not attend, the family is refused ration coupons. End Note.

MCINTYRE